



Directorate of  
Intelligence

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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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3 May 1983

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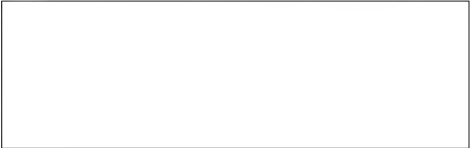
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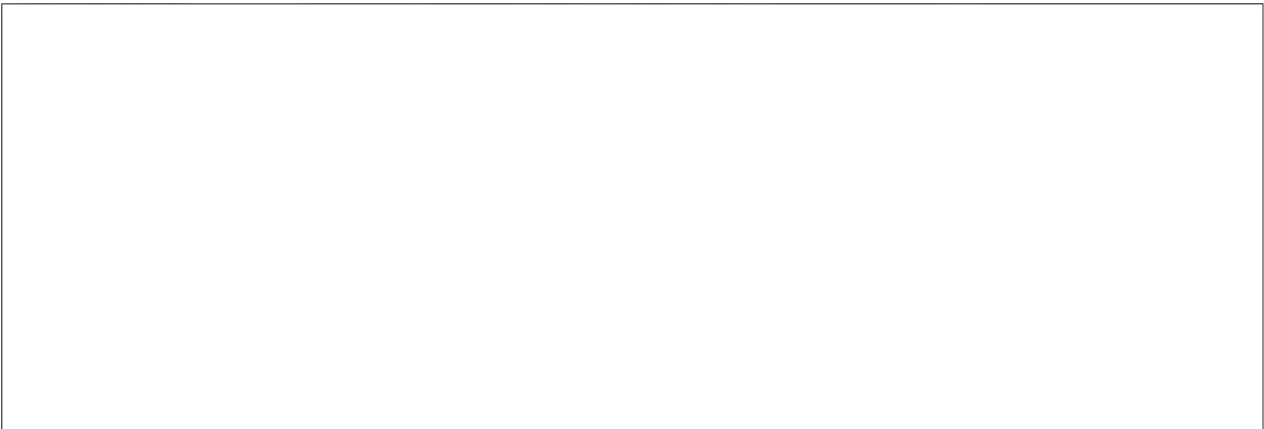
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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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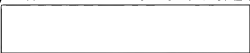
The insurgents failed to launch a major operation inside Kabul to upstage the anniversary. 

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Soviet "scorched earth" tactics have not significantly weakened the overall civilian support for the resistance, but such attacks probably would eventually reduce insurgent activity in some areas. 

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## Afghanistan: Kabul Area



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27 APRIL ANNIVERSARY MARKED

According to US Embassy reports, most of Kabul has been without electric power since insurgents destroyed several power pylons on 27 April, the fifth anniversary of the Communist takeover.

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Speeches and parades commemorating the anniversary, however, took place without incident. The level of the Soviet and several other foreign delegations was upgraded over previous years, and non-Communist journalists were invited to attend for the first time.

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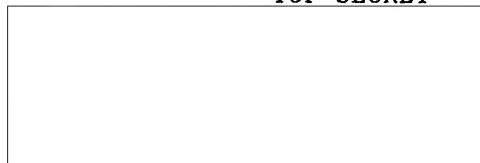
Comment: The continued failure of the insurgents to launch a major operation inside the capital to upstage the anniversary demonstrates their difficulty in overcoming extraordinary security precautions by the government. The successful celebrations and increased foreign representation will add to the government's confidence in staging propaganda events. However, the frequent disruptions of electric power in Kabul underscore the vulnerability of the city's services and supplies to insurgent attacks and will remain an embarrassment to the Communist regime.

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IN BRIEF



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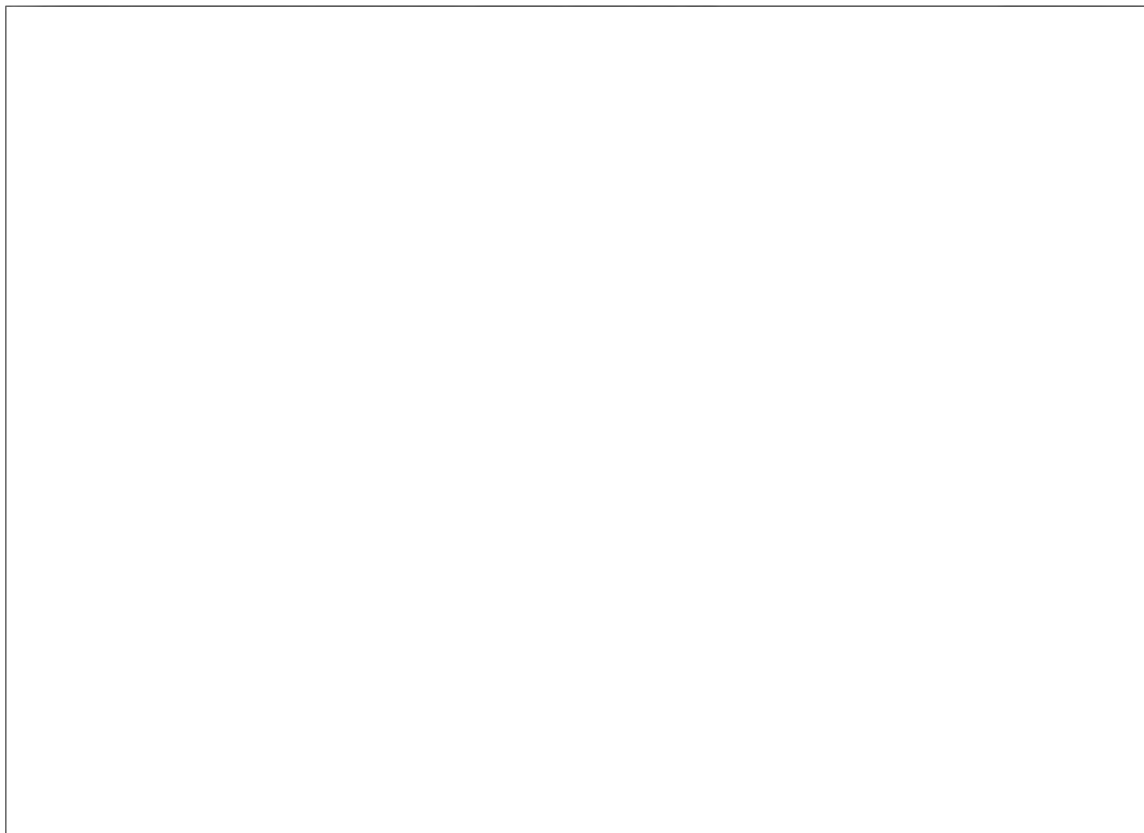


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insurgent morale in the northeastern provinces generally remains high. Religious faith is the key motivation for the guerrillas, but BBC radio broadcasts on enemy helicopter and convoy losses also help boost morale.

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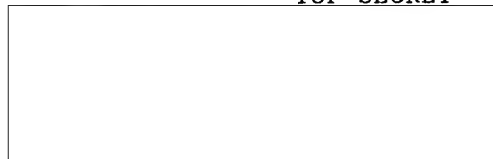
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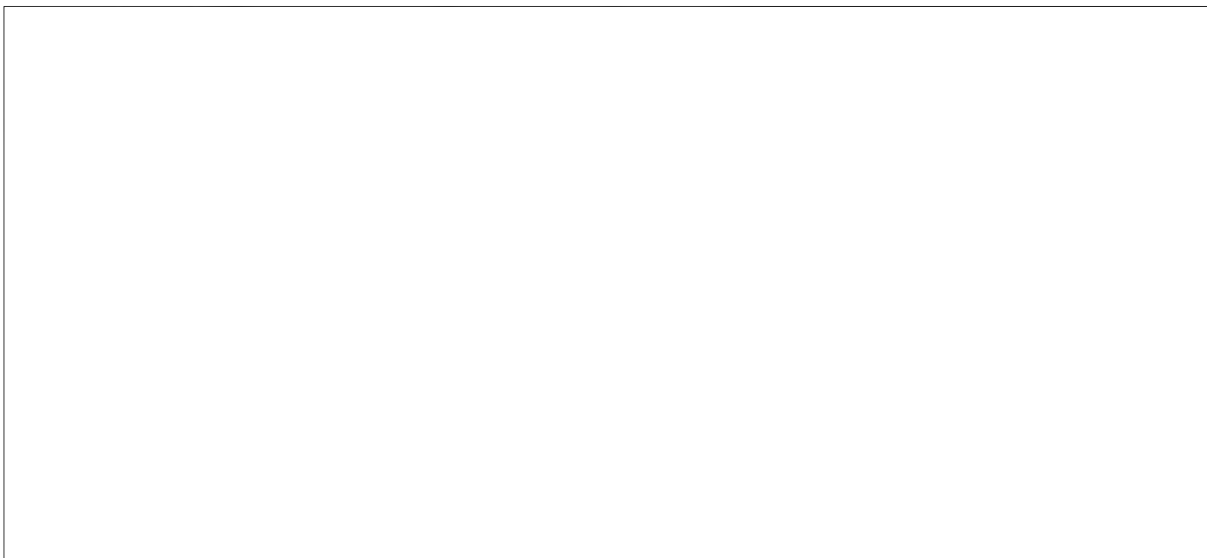
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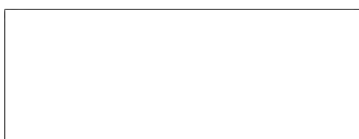
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-- The US Embassy in Islamabad reports Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub is hopeful that the Geneva talks in June will achieve a Soviet withdrawal timetable. The Embassy cautions that obstacles to a final settlement are great. 

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25X1 PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN: SOVIET SCORCHED EARTH TACTICS

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Soviet "scorched earth" tactics--the deliberate destruction of crops, farms, and villages, and the uprooting of citizens--apparently have been used only in a few locations. The Soviets have not employed the tactics systematically on a scale large enough to degrade significantly overall civilian support for the insurgency. Such attacks, however, may have led to a reported decline in civilian morale in the Panjsher Valley, contributing to local insurgent leaders' willingness to negotiate with the Soviets. Insurgent groups have taken almost no measures to protect rural civilians or resources and will find it difficult to counter such attacks in the future. Increasing the brutality and scope of the attacks across the entire country probably would weaken the resistance in general but could also backfire and create greater problems for the Soviets.

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Undercutting Civilian Support

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[redacted] deliberate attacks on civilians and their property may have taken place as early as 1980. Most incidents, however, have been reported since mid-1982. Many reports state such attacks occurred in the Lowgar Valley, the Paghman area, and especially the Panjsher Valley. [redacted]

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Soviet and Afghan forces, however, appear to have used scorched earth tactics only on a limited basis in Afghanistan. Satellite imagery indicates there was no systematic burning of fields in 1982. Crop damage from military operations appears to be small. We believe that the Soviets have tried to avoid attacking civilian targets during some

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operations. [REDACTED]

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The reported scorched earth attacks appear designed primarily to retaliate for insurgent attacks, to clear people from strategic areas, and to eliminate civilian insurgent supporters from known resistance strongholds. [REDACTED] the major change in Soviet tactics in 1982 seemed to be to attack civilians in insurgent strongholds. This resulted in more refugees and decreasing logistical and monetary support for guerrillas. Early in 1983 Soviet troops reportedly raided villages in the Lowgar Valley in response to insurgent mortar attacks on Soviet civilian housing near Kabul. [REDACTED]

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Scorched earth operations usually consist of surprise air and ground attacks deliberately aimed at civilian rather than insurgent targets. Reports [REDACTED] indicate that attacks are most effective at harvest time because the resulting lack of food hurts the civilian population most during the winter. [REDACTED] helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft attacks on villages and farm buildings appeared to be intentional. [REDACTED] Soviet troops have burned crops and have used flamethrowers to destroy orchards and fruit trees in the Panjsher Valley. In an apparent effort to prevent civilians from returning, the Soviets have reportedly planted mines and booby traps in fields. [REDACTED]

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\* In much of Afghanistan, the relationship between the resistance and civilians is so close that any distinction is somewhat artificial. [REDACTED] a typical insurgent spends part of his time at his civilian occupation as men rotate into and out of the local resistance band. In some villages, most of the population probably consists of part-time resistance fighters and their families. Only a few bands operating outside their home areas are clearly distinct from the local population. [REDACTED]

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### Insurgent Weaknesses and Responses

25X1 Scorched earth attacks and the general destructiveness of regular military operations have hurt insurgents and civilians in a few areas.

25X1 [redacted] Soviet reprisal attacks have driven 75 percent of the population from one area along the road from Kabul to Jalalabad. [redacted] some villagers in Afghanistan now dislike having insurgents around because the guerrillas' presence increases the likelihood of government attacks and destruction of crops and villages.

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Civilians appear to suffer most from the food shortages that result from scorched earth attacks and other military operations.

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Insurgent efforts to counter scorched earth attacks and protect civilians appear to be rare and ineffective. Most insurgent groups are not large enough or well enough organized to build up secret food caches or develop plans to evacuate civilians prior to enemy attacks. Hostility, and sometimes open warfare, among some groups makes cooperation even more difficult.

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### Advantages and Disadvantages for the Soviets

The Soviets may find scorched earth tactics attractive because they offer advantages to a small army in a large country fighting a potentially long guerrilla war. Civilians have little or no defense against air and ground attacks. Soviet casualties in such operations

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would be light. Scorched earth attacks would be aimed primarily at fields and villages in terrain where the Soviets can effectively use their advantages of mobility and firepower. [REDACTED]

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Military operations designed to destroy fixed and undefended targets--farms, villages, and civilians--would also rob the insurgents of many of the advantages they normally enjoy in guerrilla warfare. If the insurgents attempted to defend an area from scorched earth attacks, the Soviets could destroy not only the village but also the insurgents. Yet if the insurgents withdraw to safety, civilians and farms will be left defenseless. Local civilians probably would be more inclined to reduce their support for the resistance or even accept government control in the future. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets, however, have experienced some problems with scorched earth tactics, indicating they may be counterproductive or ineffective even on a limited scale. The overwhelming risk is that more people will join the insurgents out of anger rather than support the government out of fear. [REDACTED]

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Using scorched earth tactics on a large scale might prove even more counterproductive for the Soviets than the present limited attacks. The Soviets and the Afghan regime probably are unable and do not want to provide enough food, fuel, and shelter for the influx of rural refugees that probably would result from such a campaign. The US Embassy in Kabul reports that refugees have helped double the city's population since 1978, and the increased demand for resources reportedly is already imposing appreciable costs on the Soviets. To significantly reduce civilian support for the insurgency, however, scorched earth tactics probably would have to be used ruthlessly throughout Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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### Outlook

Over a number of years the resistance could well be hurt not only by scorched earth attacks but also by the general destruction caused by the war. Loss of food supplies and emigration of the rural population in particular would rob insurgents of vital support. The Soviets probably will continue to use scorched earth tactics on a limited basis to weaken insurgent civilian support. Repeated attacks on certain areas will eventually uproot civilians and weaken support for the insurgents, making it difficult or impossible for the resistance to survive in some areas. [REDACTED]

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The countermeasures to such attacks available to the resistance cannot be implemented easily. They also probably would only be temporarily and partially effective. Relocating people to more inaccessible areas would provide some protection but would still not prevent enemy attacks, especially by aircraft. Preventing emigration will ease some problems temporarily but could cause morale and support to decline if civilian casualties increase. Purchasing food from areas undamaged by war would help lessen food shortages. This solution, however, would be hard to implement because of the difficulties of transporting and protecting quantities of food large enough for a sizable population. [REDACTED]

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